



***United States Attorney
Southern District of New York***

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**U.S. ARRESTS AFGHAN DRUG KINGPIN ALIGNED WITH THE TALIBAN
AND CHARGES HIM WITH IMPORTING OVER \$50 MILLION IN HEROIN**

DAVID N. KELLEY, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and JOHN P. GILBRIDE, the Special Agent in Charge of the New York Office of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (the "DEA"), announced today the arrest of BASHIR NOORZAI, a/k/a "Haji Bashir Noorzai," an Afghan heroin kingpin charged with conspiring to import more than \$50 million worth of heroin from Afghanistan and Pakistan into the United States and other countries. President George W. Bush previously identified BASHIR NOORZAI as one of the world's most-wanted drug kingpins on June 1, 2004, pursuant to the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act.

According to an Indictment unsealed in Manhattan federal court today, since in or about 1990, BASHIR NOORZAI led an international heroin-trafficking organization (the "Noorzai

Organization") responsible for manufacturing and transporting heroin in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Noorzai Organization then arranged for the heroin to be imported into the United States and other countries and sold for tens of millions of dollars, it was charged.

During the course of the conspiracy, the Indictment charged that BASHIR NOORZAI controlled fields in Afghanistan where poppies were grown and harvested to generate opium. According to the Indictment, after the opium was harvested, the Noorzai Organization used laboratories in Afghanistan and Pakistan to process the opium into heroin. BASHIR NOORZAI and his co-conspirators then arranged to transport the heroin from Afghanistan into the United States and other countries, it was charged.

According to the Indictment, BASHIR NOORZAI was closely aligned with the Taliban in Afghanistan. During the course of the conspiracy, the Indictment charged that the Noorzai Organization provided demolitions, weaponry, and manpower to the Taliban. In exchange for its support, the Taliban provided the Noorzai Organization with protection for its opium crops, heroin laboratories, drug-transportation routes, and members and associates, it was charged.

As discussed above, on June 1, 2004, President George W. Bush designated BASHIR NOORZAI as a foreign narcotics kingpin

pursuant to the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act (the "Kingpin Act"), which targets, on a worldwide basis, the most powerful foreign narcotics traffickers, their organizations, and their operatives. The Kingpin Act authorizes the President of the United States to take these actions when he determines that a foreign narcotics trafficker presents a threat to the national security, foreign policy, or economy of the United States.

Mr. KELLEY said: "The Afghan drug lords who control Afghanistan's heroin supply seek to destabilize the country's emerging democracy, to exploit its farmers, and to poison the youth of the West. Our actions today will help to instead dismantle the Afghan drug trade and bring to justice the merchants of a powerful poison."

DEA Administrator KAREN P. TANDY said: "Today's arrest of heroin warlord BASHIR NOORZAI is a resounding victory for both Afghan and American citizens. We removed one of the world's top drug traffickers who orchestrated the smuggling of hundreds of kilograms of heroin into the United States and other countries and, for too long, devastated the country of Afghanistan."

Mr. KELLEY praised the investigative efforts of the DEA. Mr. KELLEY said the investigation is continuing.

This prosecution is being handled by the International Narcotics Trafficking Unit of the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York. Assistant United States

Attorneys BOYD M. JOHNSON III, AMY FINZI and LISA A. BARONI are in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Indictment are merely accusations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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